



On the Job

Congratulations! You've landed the job you wanted! Celebrate first, then sit down and think about how you can be successful on the job with your hearing loss.

Remember that your employer wants you to be a productive member of the team. Don't make your hearing loss your employer's problem. Do your homework, know your needs, and find solutions. Show that you know how to take charge and provide solutions that work, and alternatives if your first solution isn't practical in your workplace.

Know your needs

1. List all the job responsibilities and essential duties
2. Come up with possible solutions or accommodations needed
3. Meet with key people who have the authority to provide the requested accommodations

Challenging Responsibilities

- Phone work
- Meetings
- Social events

Possible Accommodations on the Job

- **Work Station Adjustments.** Sometime the newest employee gets the office next to the copy machine. That may work for most, but won't work for you. Be ready to explain to the boss how you want to be as productive as possible but that unlike people whose hearing is intact, you can't filter out the sound of the copy machine, so your phone work will suffer. If you show the reasons why this is important, your new boss may be willing to make the change.
- **Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's)/Assistive Listening Systems (ALS).** If you need your employer to purchase a system or device, you need to explain why and do the legwork. Find out what kind of systems will work, an estimate of the cost, and options for places to purchase the systems.
- **Telephones.** By federal law, telephones on your desk should be Hearing Aid Compatible (HAC) or readily available on request. If you need a captioned telephone service, or access to Internet supported captioned telephones, you will need a dedicated line, and perhaps a CapTel phone. Give your boss supporting materials to explain how they work, why you need a dedicated line in addition to the multiple phone line. Be sure to let your boss know that once the line is installed, the phone service itself is provided at no additional cost.
- **Telephones on the road.** If your company typically provides employees with a cell phone and/or Blackberry, make sure the phone you have is HAC and capable of either email or

text messaging. If you need a neckloop, make sure there is a port for that. And test the phone before going out on the job to be sure you can hear with no interference.

- **Modification of non-essential duties.** In the past, people in your position may have taken on extra duties that were not related to the job description. Such duties could include covering incoming phone calls. If needed request another co-worker take those tasks in exchange for doing a task you are better able to cover, such as picking up a client at the airport.
- **Assignments.** Written memos or notes, written summaries of discussions and emails will go a long way to ensure that you and your boss are on the same page. If your boss does not have time to write these things for you, take the time to summarize your understanding of all assignments in writing and give hard copy or email a copy to your boss to confirm your understanding of the assignment. Keep a file of those assignments and your boss' confirmation that you are on the right track.
- **Meetings.** Request agenda in advance, meeting summaries or notes after the event. Explain to your boss that this will not only help you keep up to speed, but if made available to all employees, could help them as well.
- **CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation).** CART provides virtually instant translation of the spoken word to text. A CART writer transcribes every word that is spoken and displays it on a laptop computer or using an LCD projector can project it onto a screen. A transcript of the meeting can be saved to disk if needed. CART is particularly helpful in large meetings where an ALS may not be able to "hear" everyone speaking. CART services may be new to your boss. Explain that not only will you benefit, but that it will help keep a record of the meeting for future reference and if the transcript is requested can be used for minutes of the meeting. If there is a concern about privacy, explain that like a court reporter, the CART writer's code of ethics demands confidentiality.
- **Emergency notification systems.** Strobe lights on fire alarms, vibrating pagers, low and multiple frequency alarms, or other emergency assistive technology should be in place soon after you take the job. In an emergency, you do not want to be left behind. If your boss suggests a "buddy system," let her know that the buddy system is a great back up, but cannot be relied upon: the responsible co-worker could be traveling or out sick at the time of the emergency. You need a system that is as reliable as the auditory system, and that provides the alarm at virtually the same time as your hearing co-workers.
- **Training programs.** To keep up with changes in your field, you may need to take classes that give you cutting edge information for your field. Most work places encourage employees to take such classes, so do take advantage of time off if it's offered, but be willing to take your own time or find on-line courses. Be sure to request accommodations for on site classes well in advance.
- **In-service training.** Request accommodations as needed for all in-service training.

A word about Tax Incentives

Federal tax credits and deductions to help offset the cost of accommodations may be available to your employer. Some states also offer tax incentives. See the IRS web page: **Tax Benefits for Businesses Who Have Employees with Disabilities**

<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=185704,00.html> (Page Last Reviewed or Updated: January 05, 2009) For additional information on tax benefits, contact the US Internal Revenue Service at 800-829-3676 (voice) or 800-829-4059 (TTY).

Sample Tracking Sheet of Job Responsibilities, Challenges and Solutions

Job Duties	Method	Frequency	Solutions	Costs
Contacting Clients	Telephone	Daily	HAC phone	None – in place
Contacting Clients	Email	Daily	Internet Access	None – in place
Contacting clients	Teleconference with up to 50 people	Weekly	WebCapTel	Cost of dedicated line
Contacting clients on the road	HAC cell phone with data service	Weekly	Blackberry with data service	Personal Blackberry already in place; company to pick up the cost of the data service
Meetings with co-workers	Face to face in conference room – 10 people	Weekly	ALS; request for written meeting agenda emailed in advance, written summary of action items immediately after the meeting	Cost of wide area listening system with multiple microphones; no cost to agenda and meeting summary as they are already provided
Meetings with boss	Face to face in office – one to one	Weekly	ALD; request for emailed follow up re: assigned tasks	None – personal ALD used; I will take charge of meeting summary
Meetings with entire staff	Face to face in meeting hall – 100 people	Monthly	CART	Cost of CART services
Staff picnic	Face to face outdoors – 100 people	1 x per summer	Personal ALD	None – use personal system
Workstation	Next to copy room	Daily	Request move to another open office	Cost of relocating
Workstation	Emergency alerting	When needed	Request low frequency alert	Cost of purchase & installation